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of amending the former one. I would have liked better the numerical mode. But in this instance, as in many others, the French appear to have had a quick sense of errors, but were not sufficiently cool to apply the best remedies to correct them. Bonaparte, I conceive, revoked the new calendar merely to facilitate his views in removing, as far as he could, all traces of the revolution out of his own road to arbitrary power. However unsuccessful the French revolution has hitherto been, and how much soever the good effects resulting from it have as yet been marred, by the passions engendered under the old system of errors and prejudices, by the unprincipled concert of princes against the new born liberty, and by the self-interest and ambition of Bonaparte, I cannot concede that it ought to be called "the era of folly and madness." I contemplate it in a very different character. I lament the excesses, the acts of violence, and the errors with which it was accidentally attended, but I think I perceive in it, the germ of future improvements, and that philanthropists will hereafter refer to it, as the commencement of an epoch of amelioration, when the dreadful fermentation may have subsided, and according to a kind, and always operative law of our nature, good has been produced out of evil. I do not expect, and certainly I do not desire, the permanency of the Napolean dynasty, but having long been convinced of the necessity of a change, from the accumulated abuses and prejudices of former times, and long cherished the hope that the French revolution was the commencement, or perhaps rather the forerunner of an era of reform, I cannot readily bring myself utterly to abandon my hopes. To use a significant, but not a courtly phrase of a nervous writer,

I wish "to see nations breeched into manhood."

I consider the present period as a season of obscuruation, but in contemplating it, I continue to cling to a hope beautifully and energetically expressed by Gray, and with which I once before on another occasion enriched your pages—

"Fond impious man, think'st thou yon sanguine cloud,
Rais'd by thy breath, has quench'd the orb of day,
To-morrow he repairs the golden flood,
And warms the nations with redoubled ray."

At least I will cherish the hope as long as I can, and forbear to the last extremity, to despair of the progressive improvement of mankind.

K.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

I PUT it to the candour and good sense of R. whether he thinks he has answered my plain question.—"Can the author of the political retrospect justify his frequent and severe attacks upon dissenting ministers, by pointing out a single condition in the grant of the R. D. that encroaches on the discipline, the doctrine, or the rights of the dissenting church?"

Has he pointed out one condition, that has corrupted or injured our church? Not one—since then no injury has been done, I might here dismiss him on the merits; but as he has alleged one injury, and only one actually done, I shall examine that, and then proceed to his *probabilities* and conjectures.

It is alleged, that the patriotism of dissenting ministers, at its meridian glory, in 1782, has declined since the augmentation.—This I deny. The old whig principles, not the overthrowing principles of after times,

animated their bosoms in 1782, and still continue to animate them. And if they have not been as forward in avowing these principles of late years, their silence has been owing to their abhorrence of those revolutionizing principles that have been since grafted on the tree of rational liberty, and have produced nothing but sour, rotten, and bitter fruit. This perversion of the original principles of reform to the purposes of revolutionizing democracy, and the consequent staining of the cause by the unprincipled having recourse to criminal means, united with the conviction of the injurious consequences resulting from the interference of the church with the state, determined them as *ministers* to decline meddling with polities. But be it understood, that in a *civil view* they fear not to acknowledge, that they are the same friends to a constitutional reform, that they were in 1782. The augmentation has not made them tories—as to the additional burthen to the people, (an argument never adduced before by the reviewer, though here alleged to be his principle argument,) the whole amount of the grant has been ere now bestowed upon three or four ministers, without exciting such a clamour as has been excited against this moderate and seasonable remuneration to 180 useful instructors, not for nominal offices, or sinecures, but for service actually done to the community.

If requiring the oath of allegiance be "increasing the influence of the crown," it is an increase that the King can require of all, or any of his subjects, when he and his council think proper. Nor is this any *additional* qualification, having been always required, and continuing to be required at every minister's ordination, before the people, and

since the augmentation, before two magistrates.

As to the unequal distribution of the R. D. to one third, 50*l*, to another third, 75*l*, to another third 100*l*; though this plan is objectionable, as not proportioning the reward to the duty, nor to the necessity of the rewarded persons, yet does it not create a disparity of rights, or even of influence. There is no distinction of ranks, of rights or of orders, in our church. Superior talents and probity retain the pre-eminence they are entitled to, in our ecclesiastical assemblies, but these are no more exclusively attached to classes, now, than they were to higher stipends, before classification took place. Seven years experience has not made the slightest encroachment on our primitive equality.

The right of the people to choose their own pastors, has not been once encroached upon, though it is most unfairly insinuated by R. that an encroachment has been made on this right. As to independence of the people, be it remembered that seven years enjoyment of this *mere competence* has not made them corrupt partisans of the state, nor has it relaxed their endeavours to promote the spiritual interests of the people.

Where then is that love of truth, of liberty and of christian charity, with which the Belfast Magazine made its auspicious *debut*. Is either of these manifested in the— But I hope the reviewer has fallen into the common error of supposing that the g—t were to have a *veto* on the people's choice, and that he will candidly acknowledge and recant that error. I shall now take my leave of R. after having proved, that no encroachment has been made on the rights, or purity of the

dissenting church, in accepting from an *extern* hand, that allowance for the *doubled*, or *trebled* price of every article of consumption, which they *ought* to have received from their respective congregations.

SIMPLEX.

For the *Belfast Monthly Magazine*.

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE REGIUM DONUM IN ENGLAND.

I LATELY met with the following account of the Regium Donum in England, extracted from the London magazine of 1774, written, it is alleged by Dr. Mayo, an acquaintance of the late Dr. Johnson, of whom mention is made in Boswell's life of that author.

Lord Castlereagh has proved himself the worthy successor to the principles and practices of Sir Robert Walpole. Both set up on whig principles, but having mounted the ladder, their schemes centered in practical toryism. It is curious to observe so great a coincidence of language and conduct between the donors and acceptors in 1723, and those in the present day. May we not now say that the fears expressed by Dr. Mayo, as to the effects of the Regium Donum on the independence of the dissenting clergy have been since in many instances verified?

"The origin of the Regium Donum was in April, 1723.—Fatal æra! for then protestant dissenting ministers first became state pensioners, and ministerial tools. At that time the dissenters expected, what for years before they had justly merited of the Brunswick line,—a complete restoration of all their natural rights and religious privileges. They had often reason to complain of bishops and statesmen, in former reigns; but, under George the wise and

steady, they depended on obtaining the repeal of every statute, which infringed the right of private judgement, violated the liberty of conscience, and made odious distinctions between one good subject and another.

"Sir Robert Walpole was then chancellor of the exchequer, a statesman, who knew too well, for the real interests of his country, the passions which are most apt to be predominant in the heart, and whom no man ever equalled in the application of gold. By this he daily converted his enemies into friends, and so charmed even the flaming votaries of liberty, dissenting ministers not excepted, as to reconcile them to corruption, and even to court fitters, and rejoice in them. He had observed, from year to year, the wonderful effects, which the smiles of the treasury-bench had on all ranks of men; and finding that the protestant dissenters, after being many years trifled with, were moving in earnest to obtain deliverance from their bondage, he closeted a few of their ministers whom he thought to have the most influence among their brethren, and who would best answer his purposes. In their presence, he wore the mask of friendship, and sanctity—he complimented them on their great abilities—assured them he had the heartiest zeal for the protestant dissenters, and their interests—lamented the poverty and small incomes of many of their ministers through the kingdom, and that any laws should hang over their heads. The reverend gentlemen (like their successors of the present day) were soon overpowered with his condescension, eloquence and goodness. He then declared his readiness to serve them any way, even in parliament, for the repeal of the cruel statutes against them: but the present year, 1723, was a very impo-